

ASSESSMENT AND FUTURE OUTLOOK OF THE HORIZONTAL ACTION OF THE CAREER OFFICES OF THE HELLENIC TEIs

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Abstract: *The main purpose of the career offices in Hellas is to inform students and graduates on job opportunities and career consulting, the possibilities of postgraduates studies in Hellas and abroad, the availability of scholarships etc. In parallel, they inform companies and organizations for available graduates as well as their specialty. In order to coordinate and support the Career Offices the Horizontal Action of the Career Offices of the Hellenic TEIs was formed. In this paper, an*

assessment of the Horizontal action during the first phase of operation (1996-1999) will be presented. Then the achievements of the Horizontal action in the second phase of operation until now will be discussed. Finally, the future outlook and activities will be outlined.

Keywords: *Career Office, Counseling, Higher Education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Initially, in Greece there was a selected number of Career Offices introduced as pilot projects within the framework of programme “Linkage of Universities and Technological Educational Institutes with Companies” and was supported by the First Community Support Framework and the Hellenic Ministry of Labour in early 1990s. Under the Second Community Support Framework (1994-1999) in all Hellenic Universities and Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs), Career Offices were established and supported by the Hellenic Ministry of Education [1].

In addition to the individual Career Offices supported by the Second Community Support Framework two Horizontal Actions for the Career Offices were also established and funded: one for the Hellenic Universities and one for the Hellenic TEIs [2].

Across Europe each country follows a distinct philosophy about coordinating career office organizations. For example, in Finland there is no national central unit although the Career Service Units in Finnish Universities and Polytechnics form a nation-wide network, offering their services to students, graduates and employers alike. On the other hand, in UK since 1972 there exists the Higher Education Career Services Union (CSU) whose main propose is to support the work of Career Services in the UK and provide a wide range of publications, software and services. The Horizontal Action in Greece was established after the UK model of operation.

2. GOALS AND ACHIEVMENTS OF CAREER OFFICES

The main purpose of the Career Offices one hand is to inform the students and graduates on job opportunities and career consulting and on the other to establish connections and collaboration between the universities and companies.

The Career Offices should coordinate and implement all the activities that promote the communication of the academic community with the labor market, including companies, commerce and scientific chambers, professional unions, employee agencies and unemployment offices.

The Career Offices must carry out the following tasks:

1. Direct and substantial briefing for students, graduating students and graduates concerning the market environment, position available, profile of companies, graduate studies and available scholarships in Greece and abroad mainly in European Community countries.
2. Development of an information mechanism for the new needs of industry as well as the improvement of academic curricula.
3. Research studies concerning the market environment, the specific specialties that are in demand in the job market,
4. Completion and expansion on the services of consulting professional orientation towards students and graduates.
5. Strengthen the links with the graduates and especially with the working graduates aiming at guidance mentoring to the students.
6. Information and support of alternative and life long learning educational programs in collaboration with industrial partners.
7. Helping and promoting youth entrepreneurship.
8. Support the implementation of students practical training.
9. Contribution to professional orientation of high school students and graduates concerning the specialties, the educational methods and outcomes of the Universities and TEIs.
10. Promoting field trips of students from high schools to corresponding University of TEI, including laboratory visits and seminars concerning the field of study offered as well as their job profiles.

Most of the Career Offices have developed Web pages as well as data bases. Using various computer tools they perform systematic analysis of the information embedded in the data bases. As an example of such work was presented by Bardi and Giziakis [1]. Furthermore, they have organized career days, seminars and conferences in collaboration with the academic community and industrial sector in order to establish efficient collaboration and to develop a spirit of mutual understanding and fruitful exchange of ideas.

3. THE HORIZONTAL ACTION OF THE CAREER OFFICES

In order to co-ordinate and support the Career Offices the Greek Ministry of Education under the Second Community Support Framework (1994-1999) financed the "Horizontal Action of the Career Offices of the Hellenic TEIs [2], starting November 1999. The primary goals of the Horizontal Networking of the Career Offices of the Hellenic TEIs were:

- To coordinate the development and future expansions of the individual TEIs Career Offices.
- The common design, study and usage of products and services concerning Career Offices, thus saving human and monetary resources.
- The study, organization and coordination of an integrated network information infrastructure off all TEIs Career Offices while providing and distributing useful information.

The secondary aims of the Career Offices of the Horizontal Action were:

- To promote the collaboration of the Institutes in areas such as: research programs, common specialization studies etc.
- To provide counseling and know-how to the individual TEIs that need help to overcome certain problems on Career Offices matters.
- To create a mechanism of valid and reliable evaluation of the individual TEIs Career Offices.
- To design and implement computer applications in order to support the operation of the individual TEIs Career Offices.
- The creation of information leaflets and web pages and making them available to the public.
- The development of education material suitable for the proper training and continuous education of the staff of TEIs Career Offices.
- To develop and establish a TEIs Career Office Central Coordination Body responsible for the strategic development, support and coordination of TEIs Career Offices, as well as to validate and certify the individual offices and to represent them at an international and national level.

3. CAREER OFFICES HORIZONTAL ACTION ORGANIZATION

The Horizontal Action of the Hellenic TEIs is organized in a hierarchical manner as follows:

Project Coordinator: The project leader and his responsibilities include the coordination and proper execution of the project objectives and goals. Currently is the representative of TEI of Athens.

The Executive Secretariat: It consists of the representatives of the TEI of Athens, TEI of Piraeus, TEI of Crete and TEI of Thessaloniki. They are responsible for the supervision of various studies undertaken, they evaluate the progress of the Horizontal Action and they propose actions and new activities

to the Coordination Committee. They meet at least once every two months and they propose the agenda for the Coordination Committee meetings.

The coordination Committee: It consists of the representatives assigned by all individual TEIs and the School of Pedagogical and Technical Education totaling to 15. The members of the Coordination Committee are responsible for the strategic development and implementation of the Career Office Horizontal Action aims. They meet twice per year.

4. HORIZONTAL ACTION ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE PLANS

Since November 1997, when the Horizontal Action of the Career Offices of Hellenic TEIs was founded, until December 1999, the end of the Second Community Support Framework, the following have been achieved:

- *Coordination of the services* provided by the individual TEI Career Offices resulting in the confrontation of the real needs of the users (companies, students, graduates).
- Development of a *conduct code* which determines the relationship among the individual Career Offices and among the Career Offices and their customers users (companies, students, graduates).
- Development and implementation of an integrated information system for the dissemination of information collected and processed by individual Career Offices.
- Development of common information applications for the support and operation of the Career Offices.
- The development of common documentation support material.
- The development of common training material for the personnel of the Career Offices.

With regard to the activities of publicity, the Horizontal Action developed important activities, that contributed considerably in the promotion and consolidation of the Career Offices. Specifically, several interviews to the press were taken, advertising booklets were published, several experts meetings were organized and a portal was designed and implemented. Moreover, with the corresponding Horizontal Action of the Universities, two Pan-Hellenic educational Congresses were organized, for the Career Offices of Universities and TEIs in Chalkidiki, September 1998 and in Athens, December 1999.

Concerning the information systems and databases used in individual Career Offices, each Career Office independently developed its own database according to their own

needs and purposes, although the Horizontal Action has developed a model database for an ideal Career Office database and most of them used this model. However, nowadays, the databases, the information systems and software are old and not as effective as it should be. Immediate plans are to develop a common information system that it would operate at each TEI with their own database. The database in each Career Office must consist of two parts. An inter database to cover its own needs and a common access database module for information retrieval by other Career Offices. Furthermore, a common database and communication platform is designed and implemented by the Horizontal Action. The common access database will contain information about job offerings and inquiry, continuous education and post-graduate studies, seminars and scholarships.

In the near future plans the Horizontal Action will coordinate the implementation of the job profiles of all different Departments in the TEIs totaling around 90.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper the Horizontal Action of the Career Offices of the Hellenic TEIs was presented. After describing the difference between the purpose of an individual Career Office and the aims of the Horizontal Action current organizational structure was described along with recent activities and future plans.

6. REFERENCES

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